

THE FIVE KEY TOOLS

Surfing the Waves

Notice your child's or teenager's changing interests, feelings and experiences, and explore opportunities to connect with God.

01

Key points

- Children's and teenagers' spiritual lives don't develop in a straight line.
- They have ups, downs, pauses, doubts, enthusiasms and changing interests. A child who was fascinated by the Bible last month might suddenly become fascinated by something completely different. That doesn't necessarily mean they've lost interest in God. It may simply mean that a new “wave” has arrived.
- A wave could be:
 - an interest or passion;
 - an emotion such as anger or excitement;
 - life events or circumstances;
 - something they're curious about;
- Surfing the Waves means noticing those things and looking for opportunities to help your child meet and know God in the season they're currently in.
- You don't need to surf every wave. No surfer tries to surf every wave. Sometimes you'll notice an opportunity but don't have the energy to do anything with it. That's okay.
- When you do choose a wave, come alongside rather than taking over. Use the other tools you've learned to help your child discover God in what's happening.
- And when the wave passes, let it go. You don't have to keep trying to recreate something that has finished. There will be another wave.

- Sometimes the most useful thing you can do is simply notice what's happening in your child's life and ask God how to support them in it.

02 Things to think about/chat about

- What "waves" can you spot in your child or teenager's life at the moment?
- What are they particularly interested in, curious about or feeling?
- Is there a way this could become an opportunity to help them meet God?
- Which waves do you have the energy to surf — and which do you need to let pass?

03 Have a go – under-fives

- A simple pattern is: Notice → Celebrate → Connect to God For example:
 - If they love animals: “God made animals! He's so creative. Why don't you show him your favourite animal?”
 - If they love jumping: “God gave you strong legs! Show God how high you can jump.”
 - If they love making things: “You're so good at making things! God loves making things too.”
- Notice whether they're particularly drawn to music, nature, people, silence or something else at church.
- If they become curious about God, encourage that curiosity for as long as it lasts.
- Ask your toddler how they'd like to help in church or help others and see whether you can facilitate it.

04

Have a go – children and teenagers

- Ask: “If you had £1 million to help people, what would you do and why?”
- Notice what your child or teenager is passionate about and ask God what might be underneath that.
- Help them take a small next step in something they're interested in.
- Read or watch a story about someone who made a difference and see what sparks their interest.
- Talk about your own spiritual “waves” — times when faith felt exciting, times when it felt harder, or periods when you had doubts.
- Ask what they've noticed about themselves recently.
- Chat to God about how he has made your child and what he has placed in them.
- If they're going through a difficult season, ask: “How could we help you meet with God in this?”
- Remember that the wave might last one conversation or several years. You don't have to force it to last longer than it does.

05

Keep exploring

- These ideas are a starting point, not a checklist. You don't need to try everything. Choose something that feels like it might fit your child, your family and the season you're in and see what happens.
- There is no one right way to parent for faith. You're the expert in your child, and you can experiment, notice what helps and work out their next step with God.

GO DEEPER

- › Summary of the Surfing the Waves tool (1 min watch, 4 min read)
- › Surfing the Waves and additional needs: FAQs (5 min read)
- › Session 6 of the Original Parenting for Faith course (25 min watch)

- › Session 1 of Parenting Teens for a Life of Faith Course (9 min watch)
- › Session 2, part 2 of Babies and Toddlers course (3 min watch)
- › Surfing the Waves stories – Before a hospital trip and others (2 min watch and link to other stories)

SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
